• 766 Beneath an overcast sky in the midday hours of November 30th, 1916, the late Emperor Francis Joseph was driven over the Vienna Ringstrasse to the Crypt of the Capuchins (the Kapuzinergruft), the resting place of his forbears, where the Hapsburg rulers in ancient and venerable halls, in crypt and tomb, await their resurrection. Since the early morning, a vast assemblage of mourners had been collecting behind the ranks of the troops lining the streets. The closed windows of the surrounding houses were filled with onlookers and the crêpe-covered pavement-lamps and arc lamps burned in the daylight, creating a strange atmosphere of gloom. This fateful day meant more than the end of a 68 year reign, much more than the close of an epoch, for the last hour of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had struck.

Long before the end, the coming collapse had cast its shadows before. Among these were the tragedy of the Crown Prince Rudolf at Mayerling, the fatal attack by an anarchist on the Empress Elisabeth, the murderous shots fired at Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, and his wife at Sarayevo in 1914. The Emperor was fated to stand beside all the biers and to see those around him dying off, one after the other.

Once again the Ringstrasse echoed the hoof-beats of horses sharply checked by the bearing-rein, the rumbling of funeral coaches drawn by caparisoned steeds, the rolling of muffled drums and the funeral march of the Trabant- and Arcières-Bodyguards. It was that same Ringstrasse which the Emperor had ordered to be built two generations earlier, the growth of which he had watched from the windows of his palace; he had seen its beauty as a unique monument to all that had been achieved during the francisco-josephinian era for Vienna and the Empire.

The summons had gone forth to assemble the funeral cortège of the Emperor. It was at the same time the funeral cortège of his Empire. On this last occasion, the Dual Monarchy paraded its might before the world. But with mourning for the deceased Monarch was mingled anxiety and fear of the inexorable decrees which Fate might be about to pronounce. Just once more the venerable Monarchy called its colourful mixture of peoples and nations to march past, formed up the hierarchy of its social order—aristocracy and parliamentary deputies, guilds and citizens, in accordance with the well-established formulas of age-old ceremony and with effortless ease. For one last occasion its army, rich in honour and tradition, was summoned to march past in sombre, funereal array.

On the outskirts of this silent zone, where boys were climbing street lamps to get an unhindered view of the procession, and where newsboys were shouting the headlines of extra editions, the situation was characterised by different slogans —"Przemysl", "Battle of the Isonzo", "Representation for the People", "Wilson"—and "the Republic".

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The historic scene at which half Europe had its princely ambassadors and special envoys was nearing its close. Starting from the Stephansdom and traversing part of the Karntnerstrasse, the funeral procession turned off at right angles to the Neuer Markt, to the quiet church of the Capuchin Brothers. Swords flashed in the air, commands rang out, the escorting troops froze to attention and the coffin of the Emperor was carried into the church for its last benediction.

On the right-hand side of the hall of mourning a space had been cleared. There the "Steps of the Dead" lead down to the Emperor's Crypt, last resting place of the Hapsburg Monarchs since the time of the Thirty Years' War. The folk of Vienna who filled the great square outside, pushing their way on to steps and stairways, and craning their necks to catch a better glimpse of what is going on, ask to be told—of course, it happened long ago—how it was in the days of "Franz the Kaiser".

"Before the closed doors", they tell one another, "the coffin was placed on the ground. The Master of Ceremonies lifted his baton—heavy black tassels hung from it—and knocked three times on the door.

"It had been locked from the inside by the Monastery folk and behind it stood the Pater Guardian with a lighted candle. He is in no hurry to open, and first asks: 'Who demands entry?'

"The Master of Ceremonies—the same one who times out of number, in the long gallery at Schönbrunn, had announced the coming of his Liege to invited guests—gives answer: 'His Apostolic Majesty, the Kaiser Franz.'

"The Church, however, sees a coffin before it in which a dead man lies and rejects any idea of majesty. Therefore the monk answers: 'I do not know him.'

"The Master of Ceremonies then lifts his mace again and knocks on the door with a triple rap. 'The Sovereign Kaiser Franz wishes to be admitted.'

"Unshaken and grave comes the answer: 'I do not know him.'

"And once again the voice of the monk questions: 'In the Name of God, who wishes to enter?'

"Quite simply the Master of Ceremonies returns: 'Your brother Franz, a poor sinner.'

"Only now is the door to the crypt opened and the new guest received into the realm of his forebears with that reverence of spirit which the pious monks accord to all men who believe in the resurrection of the dead."...

Waiting, whispering and conjecturing, the masses fill the square. In the meantime the monks have carried the coffin down to the crypt, where it is once again set down and the Master of Ceremonies asks: "Do you recognise the Emperor Francis Joseph?"

He is answered by the Pater Guardian "I know him. He will rest securely here."

Now the dead ruler is carried past his predecessors—twelve emperors, sixteen empresses and over a hundred archdukes lie here. The tombs of the founders

766 of the crypt, Matthias and Anna, are simple and humble, plain four-sided leaden caskets. The coffins stand side by side in long rows, bearing coats of arms, or the heads of lions beside the metal carrying rings.

Surprisingly magnificent sarcophagi stand beside them. Baroque, with its determination that one should live with every atom of one's force—and so die—has descended into the realm of the dead. Eagles about to soar in flight and couchant lions support massive coffins. Heads of veiled women, their faces wrung with grief, ornament the corners.

Maria Theresia and Franz von Lothringen! This monumental sarcophagus is a memorial of love on which the Empress and her husband are artistically depicted facing one another in lifelike fashion. At their heads waits an angel with a trumpet to arouse them on Judgment Day. Eleven of her children are grouped around the Empress, Joseph II in a simple coffin of copper.

Now Francis Joseph, after doing his duty like a soldier up to his last breath, has joined the ranks of his ancestors.

728 In October 1918 came the collapse of the Central Powers. English officers, standing in front of the Hotel Imperial, held in their hands newspapers with the headlines: "The War is Over."

For Austria it was much more than a war which was over. If the essential Austria had been no more than what was then laid to rest under the insignia of the Double Eagle, the country would then—in 1918—have certainly come to an end.

Instead, there occurred something entirely unexpected, something unique. The little Austria which remained after the destruction of the Monarchy, a severely mutilated torso to which in widespread circles in Europe it was sought to deny not only all rights, but even its ability to exist, this fragment of the heart of a continent defied the blows of fate and arose again, re-establishing its sovereignty as built up on and supported by the labours and solidarity of its workmen, peasants, and middle classes.

Eternal, indestructible, resurrected Austria!